



Guide for EMS: Quick Recognition of Toxic Agents in the Environment

CHOKING AGENTS

General: It would be unlikely that only one person (victim) would be involved, more likely there would be multiple victims and there would likely be a difference in number of victims per area depending on distance from the probable source of the toxin. The further one is from the source, the fewer casualties one would expect. Pets, stray or wild animals might also be affected so it would be important to take note of these as well as human victims. There may be odors apparent. With the exception of mustard blistering agents and radiation agents, the effects would be seen immediately.

It is imperative that the rescuer be protected from exposure! In all potential “toxin” exposures the law of distance applies, get the victim as far away from the source of exposure in the fastest time as possible! Generally the dose of the toxin falls off rapidly with distance. The treatment will be supportive and attention to the ABCs is important. Over treatment may produce problems as well as under treatment!

Symptoms: There will be **early irritation to eyes, nose and airways which will diminish with removal from the exposure site.**

Immediate irritation and pain to exposed eyes, skin, airways, there may be simple coughing, choking, or excess secretions such as those seen in pulmonary edema, i.e. clear or pink, frothy pulmonary secretions, there may be odors of freshly cut straw or grass.

Treatment: There is no antidotal therapy available, attention to the respiratory symptoms and needs is imperative.

If there is certainty that exposure was to a gas, there is no need for decontamination. If there is a possibility of contamination by liquid, clothing must be removed and skin decontaminated with soap and water.

For further help call:

